Shoppers line up for Gattis School Albertson's

By MARCIAL GUAJARDO
Leader Staff

Thousands of shoppers flooded the second Albertson's in Round Rock as the store celebrated its grand opening Tuesday.

A parking lot filled to capacity seemed to confirm the expectations of developers of the Shops at Forest Commons shopping center, which the Albertson's anchors. Project construction began in early February at the intersection of Gattis School Road and Red Bud Lane, located about five miles from Interstate 35.

The development's location, in the midst of several neighborhoods, and a lack of services in the area have also bolstered committments for the shopping center, Marshall said.

"This location has been severely underserved," said Matt Marshall, Forest Commons project manager for StoneCrest Investments. "Everybody has to drive all the way to the interstate just to get milk, eggs and bread."

The Gattis School store joins an Albertson's on Interstate 35 in Round Rock and represents part of the company's new strategic growth plan for the Austin area. The company in July announced plans to invest more than $100 million in the area for new grocery stores, convenience and fuel stores, and remodeling of existing facilities. The Gattis School store is the first new grocery store in the plan to open.

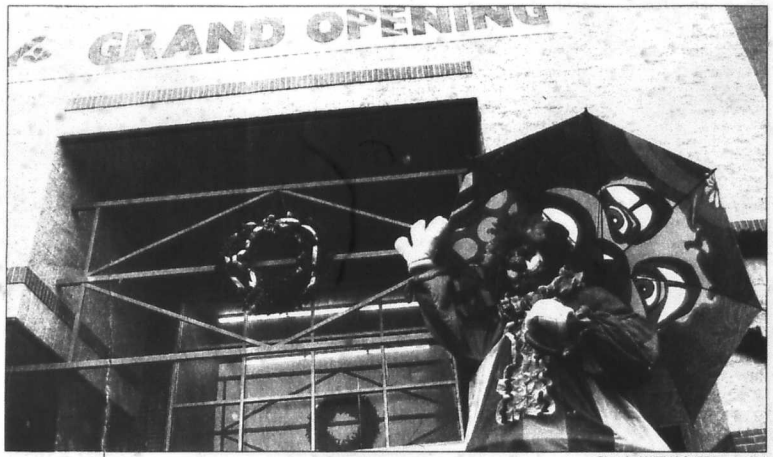

Photo by MATT ARCHER/Leader Staff

Brian Silver, a.k.a. Stretch the Clown, welcomes customers to the second Albertson's store in Round Rock, located at Red Bud Lane and Gattis School Road, on Tuesday.

The expansion is expected to take place over the next four years. This year, the company invested more than $4 million in the Austin market.

Albertson's official Scott Hays said the company was attracted to the Red Bud location because of recent residential growth there, as well as the success of the initial store.

"Round Rock has been a great area over the years," Hays said. "This was an exciting location."

Like the other Round Rock store, the new Albertson's includes a bank — Coupland State Bank — as well as a deli, bakery and photo center. It occupies about 67,000 square feet of office space.

It will compete with an H-E-B Grocery on Louis Henna Boulevard and a Randall's planned to debut at the corner of A.W. Grimes Boulevard and Gattis School Road.

Alberston's, based in Boise, Idaho, operates more than 2,300 stores in 31 states. It lists annual revenues of about $38 billion.

However, the company has undergone major restructuring in the past year. Last year, the company announced plans to close 165 stores. It also opened 16 food stores during that fiscal quarter.

By Tuesday, most of the available office spaces at the shopping center had been filled with a wide array of specialty stores. Each are expected to open this month or in early January.

Leases have been secured for nationwide chains, such as Blockbuster Video, Subway and TCBY, and locally-owned restaurants like Austin Pizza and Bamboo Cafe, a family-owned Chinese cuisine location. Others include Cost Cutters Family Hair Care, Reid's Cleaners, Nail and Skin salon, PostNet Postal and Business Services, Fast Frame, and Moondance Fine Wine and Spirits.

A Jack In the Box and an Albertson's Express convenience store, both open, round out the shopping center.

Only two office spaces remain open. StoneCrest is negotiating with potential clients to fill the slot.

Colors to be added to new $20 bills

The latest wave of U.S. do bills will be more colorful th past versions.

The Department of Treasury's Bureau of Engrav and Printing has announ plans to release the next ger ation of redesigned notes, w improved security features deter counterfeiting.

The new design, referred as NexGen, affects the $20, and $100 notes. Circulation the series could begin as ea as fall 2003, with the introd tion of the redesigned $20 n The $50 and $100 notes expected to follow in 12 to months.

Consistent with past des changes, the NexGen notes remain the same size and similar portraits and histori images to maintain American appearan According to the Bureau Engraving and Printing, it also include the introduction subtle background col which is expected to help c sumers identify the differ denominations and could h the Treasury Departm include new security measur

The purpose of the curre redesign, officials said, is to s ahead of advanced compu technologies used for so types of counterfeiti According to the U.S. Sec Service, $47.5 million in co terfeit money entered into culation in fiscal year 2001. this amount, 39 percent computer generated, compa to only 0.5 percent in 1995.

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